

Mission

The Maine Arts Commission fosters and encourages public interest and participation in the cultural heritage and artistic expression of our state. We fulfill our mission through partnerships and collaborations, outreach and advocacy, initiatives, information sharing and grants for organizations, individual artists, and communities throughout Maine.

Vision

The arts play an essential role in Maine's past, present, and future. The arts are the catalyst for creatively responding to our challenges, celebrations, traditions, and aspirations. Our arts reflect the character of our state and its people. Arts are collaborative, inspirational, healing, help us explore our humanity, and celebrate our commonalities and our differences. The arts bring us together and are a necessary part of a rich and fulfilling life in our state.

Land Acknowledgement

The Maine Arts Commission is located in the homeland of the Wabanaki, the People of the Dawn. We recognize and honor the Abenaki, Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Nations and all the First Nations communities who have lived here for hundreds of generations in what is known today as Maine. *Note: Compiled with assistance from Chris Newell (Passamaquoddy), Co-Founder/Director of Education for Akomawt Educational Initiative and a former member of the Maine Arts Commission.*

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

We believe that all people – including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion - deserve equal access and opportunities to participate in a vibrant, creative life. We will implement internal strategies and policies to ensure cultural equity is uplifted as we continually strive to build a more inclusive Maine.

About the Creation of the Strategic Plan

Creation of this plan began in 2021. The primary contributors are listed on the final pages. This plan is a work in progress and will be revisited and edited as needed to ensure that it serves as a relevant guidepost for the work of the Maine Arts Commission through 2027.

The plan includes four areas of focus: Serving, Connecting, Funding, and Advancing. These major themes emerged during our many conversations over the past two years.

SERVING

WHAT WE HEARD AND LEARNED FROM OUR CONSTITUENTS:

As with all government agencies, service must be at the center of our work. The Arts Commission works best for all when we share tools and resources with arts workers, arts organizations, and those who support them. As we learn the full impacts of the pandemic, our work to assist and elevate the creative sector in Maine is even more essential.

SERVICE AIMS + OUTCOMES

The Maine Arts Commission will:

- ✓ Be more visible to the public and to the arts and culture sector as an arts advocate, leader, partner, collaborator, funder, and friend.
- ✓ Be recognized as an arts development hub: a trusted go-to guide, listener, thought partner, and helper.
- ✓ Deliver relevant and effective development services, and research for artists and arts organizations as they successfully build audiences, raise funds, and become inspirational partners in their communities.

PROPOSED SERVICE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. Demonstrate that in addition to being a grant maker, the Arts Commission is ready to assist by listening, problem solving, making connections, and encouraging collaboration.
2. Deliver services that empower artists and leaders throughout the state through professional development opportunities such as workshops and skill-building programs, as well as sharing accessible information, resources, and toolkits.
3. Provide current and accessible resources for artists and arts organizations to participate in their local cultural development.
4. Continue developing new collaborations with other service-focused vendors that offer financial, legal, health, and insurance services; affordable housing; access to equipment and arts supplies; and more.

CONNECTING

WHAT WE HEARD AND LEARNED FROM OUR CONSTITUENTS

We must collaborate. None of us alone is as strong as all of us together. Working together enhances knowledge sharing, builds teamwork and trust, strengthens communications, relationships, and makes goals easier to attain. We heard repeatedly in planning conversations that artmakers need help honing their community building practices. Keeping arts relevant and valued in communities requires constant fresh engagement and connection. The Arts Commission's efforts to connect, facilitate collaboration, and convene will remain critical.

CONNECTING AIMS + OUTCOMES

The Maine Arts Commission will:

- ✓ Work to collectively produce a positive impact of the arts in Maine.
- ✓ Facilitate teamwork building and networking.
- ✓ Lift new voices and help facilitate essential connections among under resourced communities with other communities in Maine, New England, and Eastern Canada.
- ✓ Convene artists and organizations to strengthen their capacity and sustainability as an arts network.
- ✓ Support state-wide and regional collectives to advocate, encourage, spotlight, and promote innovation and creativity of all Maine artists and arts and culture organizations.

PROPOSED CONNECTING STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. Help guide and build a network among diverse groups of artists, arts organizations, arts associations, statewide arts affinity groups, and businesses.
2. Help empower artists and arts leaders through workshops, information, professional development opportunities, and toolkits.
3. Use collaborations to facilitate partnerships building between the arts sector and their local communities: schools, libraries, museums, businesses, and local leaders in municipalities, tourism, health and wellness, and community and economic development organizations.
4. Build our value and expand our influence as a model agency in terms of how well we partner with others.

FUNDING

WHAT WE HEARD AND LEARNED FROM OUR CONSTITUENTS

For decades, the arts sector has been remarkably resourceful. The ‘show must go on spirit’ has honed our skill sets to stretch resources masterfully. But artists and arts organization workers tell us COVID’s impact on our undercapitalized arts sector has been overwhelming. Financial support – and more of it – is needed for general operations. Artists and arts organizations are facing a myriad of challenges. The Arts Commission realizes that revamping current grantmaking to make it easier, less restrictive, and more widely accessible will be advantageous to grantees, and to the Arts Commission itself. We must also work collaboratively to increase the amount of funding that supports the arts in Maine.

FUNDING AIMS + OUTCOMES

The Maine Arts Commission will:

- ✓ Work to successfully leverage additional financial investment from other resources that do not compete with the arts sector.
- ✓ Ensure that our fund distribution is more equitable in reaching artists and arts organizations, especially those in under resourced and rural Maine communities.
- ✓ Work closely with the philanthropic sector to raise awareness and increase support of Maine artists and arts organizations.
- ✓ Work with the Governor and the Legislature to secure an increased arts appropriation from the state for operations, grants, and investment in infrastructure.

PROPOSED STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. Work together with Maine arts funders to achieve greater equity in county-by-county arts funding.
2. Strive toward more direct, less restrictive investment in local cultural development.
3. Track collective annual progress and share information to continually improve arts funding equity.
4. Guide and encourage targeted investment into specific needs, such as statewide arts service organizations, workforce development programs, artist support, creative placemaking and organizational partnerships.
5. Integrate how we dovetail what we do with the goals and objectives of other government departments and associations to secure support for artists and arts organizations with and through others.
6. Work with Maine leaders to secure out-of-state funding from regional and national sources that will result in statewide artistic and cultural impact.

ADVANCING

WHAT WE HEARD AND LEARNED FROM OUR CONSTITUENTS

To be most effective, we must have the ability to anticipate, shift, and adjust to the everchanging opportunities and challenges in Maine. We don't know what lies ahead, but we know we must work to strengthen our arts infrastructure, communications and collaborations so that, together, we can face an uncertain future with strength and focus.

ADVANCING AIMS + OUTCOMES

The Maine Arts Commission will:

- ✓ Advocate for arts education, creative aging, and life-long learning throughout Maine.
- ✓ Work with Maine's leaders to ensure that resources exist to keep talented and creative young people in Maine.
- ✓ Decentralize our programs to ensure that artists and arts leaders from around the state are actively involved in decision making.
- ✓ Make Maine a state known for its focus on holistic strategies in advancing creative placemaking.

PROPOSED STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. Together with arts and cultural leaders remove barriers to arts participation and increase accessibility and visibility using the lenses of community building and healing.
2. Advocate for arts education support in all Maine schools and communities.
3. Find creative strategies to address the cross sector needs of affordable housing, jobs, public transportation and all the other basic needs that are identified as a barrier for young people to stay in Maine.
4. Examine ways the Arts Commission can ensure a more equitable distribution of funds and resources to encompass the entire state.
5. Engage in planning with local communities to ensure a readiness for Maine to pilot creative placemaking programs that are replicable and can spread to communities throughout the state.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our deepest thanks to all who contributed to this plan by participation in community conversations, working groups, and many planning sessions. We look forward to your continued involvement as we move forward together with plan implementation.